

Mettle of Honor

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Summary: A clash of interests, a common goal; there can only be one outcome when the Mettle of a Marine meets the Honor of an Elite.

1. Chapter 1

Mettle of Honor

Trapped. Trapped alone in a pod. The drop was a failure. Stuck in a reentry capable coffin with nothing but his MA5C, his M6D, and his armor. The pod couldn't open. He could do nothing but think about how he got into the predicament.

****July 7th, 2559****

The UNSC _Grapes of Wrath_ was a Black-Cat class ship, and had been taking part in the battle over the planet Roost, which had been under attack by a small Brute fleet. The _Grapes of Wrath_ was not designed for combat. Rather, it was made for the sole purpose of stealthily transporting squads to and from their destinations. Therefore, the decision made by Captain Darius Hunter to aid in the battle was not well thought out.

After less than ten minutes, the ship was damaged beyond repair. In a moment of panic, the Captain made a blind jump to the nearest star system.

Captain Hunter wasn't known for his prowess, or for his frequent disregarding of regulations. He was known for smoking. Not one member of the ODS squad onboard had ever seen him without a cigarette. Thus, Hunter was known to most as "Smoker".

While he did have a tendency to screw the rules, he had never caused a casualty before, and he intended to keep it that way. He would get the Helljumpers off his ship even if it killed him.

It was only after speaking with the leader of the squad of Helljumpers, a Gunnery Sergeant Devonshire, that Captain "Smoker" noticed the destination he had plotted. He ordered the ODSF squad to gear up and be ready for anything.

With multiple small holes and numerous missing plates, the _Grapes of Wrath_ exited Slipspace. There was a great depression on the hull from a particularly crafty Seraph, and the Slipspace drive was leaking coolant. The damage done to the ship was nothing compared to the carnage the Black-Cat intruded on.

The squad had just entered the Battle of Sanghelios.

Both factions possessed numerous ships, with the Brutes holding a slight numbers advantage. This did not matter to the Sangheili, for they had the advantage of experience in ship-to-ship combat.

There were no formations or patterns of the ships. The Humans had a hard time distinguishing which ships belonged to which faction. Only the friend or foe indicator told the Captain which ships were his allies.

Captain "Smoker" told the Helljumpers to finish their preparations and board their pods. When abandoning ship, most people go to escape pods. An ODSF prefers to go feet first. The five Helljumpers climbed into their SOIEV drop pods and waited for launch.

The _Grapes of Wrath_ was crippled, and the Captain knew it. The ship was drifting on an intercept course with an advancing Brute assault carrier, and "Smoker" was ready for the _Grapes of Wrath_ to make its last delivery.

He launched the pods to the red planet and walked to the engine room. His data pad started a countdown until collision.

1 minute

The Captain entered the engine room and observed the massive puddles of extremely flammable fuel and coolant.

30 seconds

He lugged the only Shiva nuclear warhead into the room and primed it.

20 seconds

He lit his last cigarette and took a deep drag as he pondered the impact he will make in history. He wondered if children will laugh at his nickname when they read it in their textbooks.

10 seconds

He said a prayer and wished the Helljumpers luck.

5 seconds

The ship burst through the Brute's shields as the Captain watched the red tip of the cigarette in his hand.

2 seconds

Captain Darius "Smoker" Hunter flicked the cigarette into the pool of fuel surrounding the nuke.

The destruction of the UNSC Grapes of Wrath from within the assault carrier's shields nearly tore the ship in half. The resulting chain reactions within the ship finished the job.

Unfortunately, the loss of the Brute ship left only the smallest of dents in the outcome of the battle. Through witnesses from the ODSF squad and nearby Sangheili Shipmasters, the sacrifice would be remembered and recorded for history.

Meanwhile, five dots raced through the battle towards the alien planet. It was nothing short of luck that none of the drop pods were struck by weapons or debris. The Helljumpers quietly set up an RV point in case they were split up and spent the rest of the drop in silence.

Things went wrong for the newest member of the squad when the HEV's entered the red atmosphere. The Corporal did not share the good luck of his squad mates. He had the misfortune of meeting a Seraph fighter, whose pilot was also lacking in luck. The pod drove through the fighter, and the Corporal yelled as the pod strayed off course. The drag chute failed to deploy on time, and he could do nothing but watch the clouds race by and the mountains rising into view.

The drag chute and the landing jets deployed at the same time. Those were the only thing that stopped him from dying on impact, especially because the hatch side of the SOIEV was angled slightly towards the ground; an angle that would usually be followed by death.

Luckily for the rookie of the team, his pod struck the side of a hill. Unluckily, it also rolled. He was knocked unconscious from the impact of the landing, so he was spared the spinning view of Sanghelios. Not that there was much to see through the blur. The beach he landed on was nothing special, appearing to be almost exactly like the beaches that surround lakes on Earth. The forest, though, was astonishing. Every single tree was taller than a three-floor house, yet the trunks were only about as thick as the Corporal himself (which isn't saying much).

The drop pod eventually stopped rolling, settling right in between the water and the forest. It came to a rest laying on its hatch. If he were awake, the Corporal would've had a great view of the sand pressed against the window.

About an hour later, he let out a groan as he came to. He opened his eyes and felt something drip down between them. He lifted his head, but the action felt strange. The ODSF realized that the pod was laying down on its front. The window revealed nothing but sand. His restraints were the only thing keeping gravity from pulling him down. Knowing it would be useless, he armed the explosive bolts and hoped they would flip the pod over. No luck. They fired, but had no effect due to the weight of the SOIEV on the hatch.

The Corporal shook his head and pulled his helmet off. Feeling the blood on his forehead, he knew the bucket had saved him from a lethal head injury. He let it drop to the "floor" of the pod door of the

pod, since that was down, and settle there. His beacon was already activated, and he could do nothing but sleep while his squad was hopefully looking for him.

Trapped. Trapped alone in a pod. The drop was a failure. Stuck in a reentry capable coffin with nothing but his MA5C, his M6D, and his armor.

****And there's chapter one. There's more to come, a lot more than my previous story. I had a bit of fun with this, as you may have noticed with the references. Yes, there are a number of subtle references throughout the chapter and the rest of the story. Can you find them? Remember, I can't post more chapters unless I get reviews.****

****Bler****

2. Chapter 2

Sabi 'Granul was flying his Type-26 Ground Support Aircraft, or "Banshee", through the occasional rain of debris from the roaring battle above. He was heading towards a Keep that hadn't been heard from ever since the debris had started falling. His view screen showed five dots streaking down through space. Passing them off as nothing more than debris, he started to veer left when one of the dots caught his eye. The Sangheili returned his attention to the dots when he saw one of them punch straight through a Seraph fighter. The Seraph threw the dot away from the other four. Sabi knew it wasn't just a piece of debris when it failed to shatter, so he reported to his squad that he was going to investigate the solo anomaly due to it being closer than the rest of its group.

He lost sight of it when the unidentified object shot past the treeline, but could easily tell where it landed due to the rising dust cloud. He set a NAV point on the location, and set his Banshee down in the nearest glen. The Sangheili did not want to be caught by surprise, so he started walking the estimated three units to the object's landing zone.

About one cycle later, Sabi 'Granul arrived at the beach. He immediately noticed the path the object had plowed through the trees and the sand. At the end sat a slightly smoking hunk of metal. He approached cautiously, his Type-51 Carbine leveled at the mysterious thing. When he was just a couple steps away, Sabi noticed that the object was a pod. He had been confused about the thing because it was laying on its front in a very damaged state, and because he did not realize that any Humans were on the planet.

The Sangheili slung the Carbine on his back and walked closer to get a better look at the pod. The pod did not reveal any occupants, alive or dead, so Sabi would have to find out himself. He lifted a leg and struck the pod, then watched it roll over. He kicked the pod once more, dislodging the already loose hatch.

His hand reached in and grabbed the first thing he felt. He yanked it up into the air, then heaved it onto the sand. Recognizing exactly what he had caught, he pinned the Human down with one knee across its legs and ejected the Plasma Dagger from his wrist, the blade one twitch away from piercing the Human's throat.

"You dare defile my home planet, Human? Explain yourself!"

After catching his breath from being slammed on the ground, the Human asked, "You think I want to be here, split-lip? You think I had a choice? Please, this isn't exactly my choice vacation spot, so would you kindly get off of me?"

The Human's piercing green eyes paused Sabi's blade. He probably would have thrust the blade into the Human for his insolence if something hadn't told him not to. "Why are you here?" Sabi shouted in the standard baritone voice of the Sangheili, mandibles flaring.

Still pinned down, the Human said, "Alright, alright. Touchy. My ship made a blind jump, ended up here, I jumped in a pod, hit something on the way down, then was attacked by an angry alien. Can I go now?"

The Sangheili could barely hold back his urge to kill. "You're on my planet, Human, so where do you plan on going?"

"I don't have to tell you anything, split-chin," the Human replied with a grin.

Sabi couldn't kill the Human; his mind wouldn't let him for some reason. He was, however, free to inflict pain. With a Sangheilian smile, he began to press his weight down on one of the Human's legs. To his surprise, the Human laughed.

"There's nothing there, hinge-head. Lost it five years ago. I thought my adventures were over when I took that spike in the knee. Don't worry, the spike found its way back to its owner, I made sure of that!"

Sabi was confused. The story this Human told felt quite familiar. Five years? A Human year is about one unit, if he remembers correctly. Where was he five units ago? His eyes widened as he remembered.

"Five of your 'years' ago, you were on the Human colony of New Harmony, were you not?"

The Human's face crinkled into an expression of dubious surprise. "What? Yes! How did you-"

"And while you were there, you killed three Brutes, two of them single handedly while wounded, correct?"

"Yes..." The Human's expression of surprise melted into suspicion.

Getting over his shock from the revelation, Sabi released the Human and helped him to his feet.

"Then it is as I suspected. What did the Human medics call you? Derk?"

The Human's face lit up when he figured out where this was going. "Close," he said.

Tilting his head questioningly, Sabi asked, "Then what is your name, Human?"

The Human extended his hand towards Sabi 'Granul and said, "Corporal Derek Cooper."

****And there's chapter 2, where the names of the Human and the Elite from "A Rookie's Dream Patrol" are revealed. The story is a lot easier to write when I actually use names and dialogue.****

****Thank you for the reviews! I hope to receive more. Anyway, here are the references from the last chapter, and there are more throughout the rest of the story. ****

****The date is** July 7th, 2559. **July 7th is Bungie Day and 2559 is 7 years after the Halo event. ****

Not one member of the ODST squad onboard had ever seen him without a cigarette. Thus, Hunter was known to most as "Smoker".

****The Hunter and the Smoker are two of the Special Infected in _Left 4 Dead_.****

With multiple small holes and numerous missing plates, the _Grapes of Wrath_ exited Slipspace. There was a great depression on the hull from a particularly crafty Seraph, and the Slipspace drive was leaking coolant.

****The "Grapes of Wrath" is a classic book that takes place during the Great Depression, thus the mention of the great depression on the hull. I hated the book, so I blew up the ship :D****

****And that's all I have to say about that. Hope to post the next chapter soon.****

3. Chapter 3

"It's called a hand shake. It is the standard Human greeting. We shake each other's hands while we say our names. You already know mine, so..." Derek explained, still holding his hand out and starting to feel a little silly.

The black-armored Elite looked very unsure about what to do. His mandibles were shifting as he kept switching his gaze between the offered hand and Derek's face. Deciding it wasn't a trap, he took Derek's hand, completely enveloping it with his own, and shook it from side to side.

"I am Sabi of the Granul clan."

When released, Derek said, "Alright Sabi, we'll have to work on that handshake, but it's certainly a start." He walked back to the HEV and began to retrieve his gear. The inversion from leaning over to reach into the pod caused his minor headwound to become an instant headache. Managing to grab his MA5C, his M6D, and all the remaining gear, he sealed his helmet with a grimace from the wound.

The ODST secured his rucksack and turned towards Sabi, waiting for

him to make the first move. Being a little short for a shock trooper at five-foot-two, he had to crane his neck to meet the gaze of the alien, who was easily over eight feet tall while slouching.

"Where do you plan on going, Derk-Human?" asked Sabi.

"My name is Derek," said the Human whilst depolarizing his visor and adjusting all his out-of-angled gear, since he had landed against a gravity well that was not in the proper downward location at the time of impact.

"Yes. Derk."

"Der-eck! Is it honestly that hard to pronounce?"

"Derk!" Sabi's hands were clenching into fists from the frustration.

Derek sighed. "You're not making this any easier, Sabi Granola bar."

"'Granul," Sabi growled.

Sabi watched him roll his eyes through the visor. The Helljumper said, "Let's go find my squad."

Sabi wasn't expecting the imposing assumption. "Let's? When did I suddenly become your teammate?"

"When you volunteered to escort me through your home world," he replied while turning back towards the forest.

"I did no such thing, Human!"

Derek smiled and polarized his visor. "Would you rather have me free to 'defile' whatever I want, without anyone to stop me?"

"That is not going to hap-" Sabi began, interrupted by flashes of green driving into his shields. He immediately dove behind the pod for cover. Derek had been standing in the middle of the beach, so he chose to run for the forest instead. He realized what a bad decision he had made when he remembered that all the trees gave very little cover with their skinny trunks. Luckily there was a cluster of boulders nearby, which he quickly ran to while equipping his assault rifle. Unluckily, the marksmen Brute had been hiding behind that same group.

They both stood from cover at the same time and froze, seeing how close they were. After two full seconds had passed, the Corporal raised his MA5C and started to pump lead into the Brute's shields, while the beast threw his Carbine down and berserked. The fourteen rounds Derek had fired were just enough to break the shields before the rifle was knocked out of his hands by a shoulder charge.

He drew his combat knife and fell into a low fighting-stance. The Brute ran at him again, desiring nothing but blood. It leaped through the air, paws raised above its head to deliver a devastating hammer strike. What the thousand pound gorilla didn't expect was for Derek to rush forward at the last second, driving the knife into the ribs to puncture a lung, but also taking the full momentum of the Brute

crashing into him.

It landed on top of him, smothering his whole body. Even so, he was able to draw his pistol and finish the Brute with two blind shots to the head. Then came the problem of getting the ape off of him. It was like trying to get out from under a tree. As much as he pushed, the body wouldn't budge. He suddenly heard a voice.

"Impressive. Most impressive."

The body was rolled over, giving Derek a view of the black-armored alien towering over him. He got to his knees and retrieved his knife while holstering the magnum on his thigh.

"Not bad for a Human, right?"

"I've seen you do better," Sabi said while handing him his assault rifle by the butt of the weapon.

Derek took the MA5C and regarding the way it was handed to him, said, "You should really show more respect for someone else's stuff."

"I respect your species' dedication to the battlefield, but not your crude weaponry," replied Sabi.

Derek sighed while shaking his head and happened to look down, seeing his chest covered with red blood with blue spots.

Sabi said, "Wear that with pride. You just arrived, yet you've already spilt the blood of our enemy."

"Um... Thanks. Will you help me find my squad?"

"I will gladly accompany a distinguished warrior such as yourself."

Derek depolarized his visor. "Distinguished? I don't think so. I was only promoted to Corporal for my two kills on New Harmony."

"Your actions credit your species, Derk-Human. Do you have the means to track your squad?"

"No, some of my helmet's functions were scrambled from my graceful landing. I can't see their signals."

Sabi said, "Then let us return to my Banshee. I shall report to my squad on the way there and ask if they have made contact with your squad. You and your teammates are the only Humans on the planet, correct?"

The ODST replied, "As far as I know."

"Then let us make haste. We must find them before the Brutes do."

"Agreed."

With that, they plunged into the forest and traced Sabi's footsteps back to his Banshee, the howls of the lone Brute's pack long behind them.

The Sangheili activated his comm. "Squad leader, Sabi 'Granul reporting in. I have made contact with a Human who has been separated from his team, have you had any repor-"

The squad leader interrupted, "A Human? Intruding on our home world? And you want to help it? Do you enjoy shaming your ancestors?"

With an indignant huff, Sabi replied, "This isn't just any Human. This is the one I told you about who acted with the highest honor on the Human colony of New Harmony. I request permission to help return the Human to his team."

There was a pause in the communications as the squad leader thought it over. "Permission granted. I have not received any reports of any Humans on the planet. You would do well to make your way to the nearest Keep and request to use their communications and surveillance."

"Acknowledged. Sabi 'Granul out."

"Well?" Derek panted. He had to run at a good speed to keep up with the longer-legged alien's 'pace'.

"No contact has been made with any Humans. We're going to have to find them the hard way. We'll start our search at the nearest Keep, which should be nearby."

Dubious, Derek asked, "How do you know they will help a Human?"

Sabi began to explain, "The Ack'Ley clan has always been very hospitable to those outside of their family. You should be no differe-

He broke off when he entered the clearing where the Banshee was parked. Forever. A huge hunk of metal lay where only a few purple pieces of the vehicle remained, likely more debris from orbit. Both soldiers approached the wreckage, and Derek noticed something familiar about the debris. Looking closely at the dark grey metal, he could faintly see "G..ape...f...rath". Sabi watched as the Helljumper removed his helmet and saluted.

Sabi casts the human a look that says he thinks Derek has lost his mind. "What are you doing?"

Derek solemnly replied, "Honoring the first Human casualty of this battle over your world."

**End of chapter three, or as I like to call it, the Star Wars chapter due to the numerous references. **

Reference from chapter two:

"Lost it five years ago. I thought my adventures were over when I took that spike in the knee."

** -The infamous "Arrow in the Knee" meme from Skyrim. It took all my willpower to refrain from using it in "A Rookie's Dream Patrol".
**

****Next chapter coming soon!****

4. Chapter 4

There was nothing Sabi could say. He let the warrior have his moment in peace. Eventually, Derek placed his helmet back on and said, "Let's go."

Acknowledging that, the Sangheili answered, "The nearest Keep is about four units away. I shall lead."

With that, the two soldiers started the long jog to the Keep. Though Sabi was very curious about the Human and had many questions, he knew that Derek was not in the mood for talking. The hour of running passed in silence. As they approached the Keep, the woods had steadily become thicker and thicker, to the point where the red sky could no longer be seen. Sabi signaled Derek to halt when they came to the edge of a clearing near the Keep. They both felt something was not right; the air was thick and heavy, and when the wind turned occasionally from their backs, the faintest wisp of smoke flavored it. The suspicion was quickly proven correct when they stepped into the clearing, their gazes drawn to the thick, black, billowing smoke rising up from the direction of the Keep.

"By the Gods! No!" Sabi gasped.

He sprinted ahead towards the destruction, with Derek trying his best to keep up. Derek stopped at the edge of what probably used to be the Keep's walls while the Elite ran straight in. There were only a couple slabs still standing, and the entire area was coated in white ash. The ODS'T couldn't even figure out what the architecture used to look like.

Sabi was sifting through the ash, finding the bodies that weren't ash themselves. Derek was standing beside him when the Elite found what would soon become just a body. Half of the Sangheili was missing from the waist down. The alien let out a feeble cough and asked Sabi, "Why... do you keep yourself in... the company of such... vile creatures?"

"Brother, this warrior is the most honorable Human I have ever met. He is not to be trifled with."

"I was not... referring to... the Human..."

Sabi waited for him to say more, while Derek immediately straightened and reached for his MA5C. He had realized that the mortally wounded split-lip was telling them that they weren't alone. Sure enough, plasma started flying from some of the larger piles of debris. Sabi ran for a very near pile of rubble and yelled, "Get to the house!"

Derek ran after his alien comrade to what he assumed was a house. He immediately dove behind one of the larger pieces of debris, right next to Sabi, who was already taking potshots with his carbine. The Helljumper was encountering difficulty actually finding the enemy due to the large amounts of smoke. Using his VISR would be useless due to the sunlight. As soon as a Brute would appear from the smoke, he would pump as much lead into the alien as it took. He was so busy

burning through his ammo that he didn't notice the shadow quickly approaching.

Derek was pulled off his feet, and was being dragged away from cover. He twisted around as much as he could to shoot at whoever was dragging him away, but lowered the rifle when he saw that it was Sabi who was pulling him away from the battle. Derek scrambled onto his feet as he pried the alien's hand off his shoulder. Sabi hollered,

"Run Human! Run!"

He'd been wondering why the Elite was running towards the forest when he happened to look up.

With one glance, he turned, slung his rifle, and sprinted after Sabi, for blocking out the sun was a plummeting CCS-class battle cruiser. The ship was as long as the infamous "Truth and Reconciliation", so they were lucky that only the bow was on a crash course with the destroyed Keep. Sabi and Derek passed through the tree line and didn't look back. They could tell how close it was just by hearing it; the very air shuddered and trembled with the thunder of that falling monolith, the combination of the holes in the ship and the speed it was traveling at produced a prolonged, piercing scream, punctuated by the occasional explosion. They were still running when the cruiser crashed down a mere half-mile away from them with the sound of a sonic boom.

The impact caused a massive shockwave that affected everything within a two-mile radius, and completely obliterated everything else within a quarter mile of the impact zone. A large chunk of the forest was uprooted, and trees were launched like darts. Derek and Sabi were unable to escape the devastation. Just the shockwave itself was enough to momentarily cease the blood flow to Derek's brain, causing him to black out instantly. If the same didn't happen to Sabi, the rock he collided with finished the job, knocking him out too.

Chapter 4 is finished. I hope you liked it! I certainly enjoyed writing it. The falling ship part played in my head like an action movie, and I hope I passed that on to you. On to chapter 3's references!

"Being a little short for a shock trooper at five-foot-two, he had to crane his neck to meet the gaze of the alien, who was easily over eight feet tall while slouching."

Based on the quote from Princess Leia, "Aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?"

As much as he pushed, the body wouldn't budge. He suddenly heard a voice.

"Impressive. Most impressive."

**Part of a quote from Darth Vader. **

"The Ack'Ley clan has always been very hospitable to those outside of their family."

**The acklay was one of the beasts in the arena on Geonosis in Episode Two. **

"Run Human! Run!"

**Forrest Gump of course. **

That's it for references. Please tell me, do you like this reference "game"? I'm kinda running out of them... I've also noticed that the amount of reviewers has dropped off. This does not help the speed of my updates, if you catch my drift...

Thanks for reading!

5. Chapter 5

By the time Derek slowly woke up, Sangheilios' sun had already begun to set. He was experiencing a headache as he shakily got to his feet, leaning on the fallen tree his body had come to a rest at. He eventually found Sabi sprawled over a boulder. The slight movement of his mandibles indicated that he was breathing, but unconscious. If they had lived, he thought, then Brutes most likely have too. They had to get out of this wide open space. He started shaking the Elite to wake him up, but that didn't work, so he punched him enough times to break his shields, but to no avail. Derek decided that he would have to carry the alien out of here.

The first attempt to pick him up reminded him that the eight foot tall Elite had three feet and a couple hundred pounds on him. He wrapped his arms around Sabi's armpits and began to drag him back towards the forest. A good five minutes later, he came to a safe distance in the woods. Finding an uprooted tree, he placed Sabi in the hole in the ground left by the tree's root ball and propped him against the roots. He could barely see the forestry around him due to the sun having set. Did this planet even have a moon? If not, he'd need to heavily rely on VISR mode.

Because he knew nothing about the planet and its dangers, he decided that they should sleep in shifts. Derek would obviously take the first watch. He switched to VISR mode and watched as the night vision slowly outlined everything in yellow in an expanding radius from himself. Each tree, each blade of grass, all easily visible.

For an hour, he stood in one spot and did nothing but observe his surroundings, noting the rising of the very large moon that looked very similar to Earth's moon. He wondered if all moons look like that. The most eerie thing about the Sanghelios was that besides sporadic weapons fire, everything was completely silent. There wasn't even the noise of a breeze blowing through the foliage, for there was no wind. Derek knew something was coming when the silence was broken. It sounded like something was pushing through the bushes. From the sounds of it, it was trying to be stealthy, but wasn't doing a very good job of it.

He called out, "Who's there? Friend or foe?"

No response. The rustling had ceased for about three minutes before starting again. The ODS pulled the MA5C from his back and adopted a battle ready stance. Unfortunately, he couldn't figure out where the

noise originated from. He was becoming disoriented from constantly turning around to address whatever was hiding in the underbrush. A distinct noise of armor shifting was heard, causing Derek to spin around and aim his rifle at Sabi. The Elite had just shifted in his sleep. The rifle was lowered as he took a deep breath.

A breath that was cut short when something prodded the back of his helmet.

"Don't move, Imp," a Brute's voice growled.

Derek resisted the urge to turn around, knowing that the Brute would blow a hole straight through his helmet with whatever weapon it was holding if he didn't comply. Considering the distance between him and the voice, he guessed that the weapon was either a Needle Rifle or a Carbine. How was he going to get out of this? Brutes don't take prisoners. He would just have to stall until an opportunity arose.

"Throw away your weapon. Now!" the Brute commanded, and Derek complied. "This is not your battle, puny Imp, but you shall die all the same. Your head will make an excellent trophy."

Derek quirked a brow, pondering the Brute's terminology. "Imp? I'm not a Demon?"

The Brute chuckled. "Were you a Demon, you wouldn't have been caught in this situation. Any last words?"

The ODST promptly adopted a snide grin; "Hell yeah; I got three for you. Kiss. My. Ass."

The Brute snarled and tensed to fire, but immediately switched targets when he heard a groan from the unconscious Sangheili in a few feet in front of him. Seeing his chance, Derek ducked and launched himself backwards at the Brute, startling him into firing. The green shot that passed by the Helljumper's head told him that it was a Carbine. He slammed into the alien as the radioactive plasma bolt struck Sabi's shields, causing his eyes to fly open. Unfortunately, the Elite was not quick enough to react, as the Brute's giant arm wrapped around Derek's neck and pulled him right against his body. One arm squeezing his throat, the other pointing at Sabi, the Brute had the advantage. In response, the Sangheili stood and drew his own Carbine, pointing it at their foe.

The Brute laughed and said, "Your move, heretical creature. Shoot me, and I crush the Imp's neck. Stand down."

Derek knew that the muscles this beast possessed could easily break his neck with a single squeeze. He had to move fast, as he was running out of air anyway. He made a show of weakly trying to pry the arm off while he wheezed to Sabi, "Don't... I... got this..."

With no air left in his lungs, he worked quickly and efficiently while black spots appeared in his vision. The ODST threw his arms out and slightly bent the elbow of the Brute to aim the rifle upwards while the other arm struck the plug ejection mechanism on the side of the Carbine. The magazine plug shot out of the top of the gun and struck the Brute with a force almost equal to a bullet. A really big bullet. The grip around his throat tightened for a split-second then

loosened, and Derek ripped the hairy arm away from him just as his vision was almost completely dark. He inhaled the most air he had ever had in one go as he toppled forward onto his hands and knees, not even hearing Sabi shooting at the beast above him, but he still knew what was going on.

Inhale number two was less successful, with Derek erupting in a small coughing fit, sending blood onto the inside of his helmet due to his throat being almost completely crushed. Even though he still had black spots dancing before his eyes, he drew his M6D while on his hand and knees, and with just one hand, blindly fired his entire clip at the Brute who was almost behind him. The gorilla was stumbling from the impact of each projectile and was unable to defend himself from Derek's lucky headshot. The Helljumper was alternating between gasping and coughing, and dropped the pistol so he could support himself better. The Brute's body collapsed inches to his right, and he got his first look at the ape-like alien. It was a gold-armored Captain, just like that one back on New Harmony. He had no time to reminisce, for he passed out despite his attempts to breath and collapsed right in the puddle of rapidly spreading red blood of the Brute.

Sabi watched the Brute collapse and reloaded his Carbine. He prepared to congratulate the warrior for his impressive kill, but stopped short when the Human collapsed. He ran forward and pulled his comrade away from the body and flipped him onto his back. Sabi knew something was wrong, but didn't know what to do. He decided to start by removing the helmet. Kneeling down next to Derek, he fiddled with the helmet until he was able to unlatch it and pull it off, Brute blood and a small amount of Human blood dripping from it. The Human was hoarsely gasping and coughing in his sleep. Sabi could figure out that the Brute did some damage to his neck, but he didn't know how to help.

Blood was trickling out of his mouth at a slow rate. Every time he coughed, more blood would be thrown to the ground. Sabi knew nothing about Human biology, so he could do nothing but watch as his condition worsened and was coughing more than breathing. This was not an honorable death.

Would a Human medic be able to help? Apparently, Human culture dictates that the wounded are always healed. Sabi did not understand how they could live with themselves after losing honor from being healed. Not that it matters for Derek-Human. Unless someone in his squad is a medic, he can't be healed. He considered killing him to preserve his honor as most Sangheili do to their wounded brethren, but decided that the Human culture would not smile kindly upon that course of action.

Sabi was retrieving the Human weapons when Derek's gasping and coughing softened and slowed down to a stop. The Sangheili ran back to him and slid to a stop at his side. This small Human had proven himself to be a capable warrior and Sabi had begun to think of him as a battle brother. Almost an honorary Sangheili.

He leaned over Derek so his ear hole was right above his mouth and listened very closely. It was faint, but it was there! The sound of breathing! His mandibles quivered with a happiness he did not understand. Why did he care so much for this small Human? Their species were at war seven years ago. Did Sabi believe he could make

amends for the Sangheili's attempted genocide of the Humans? He did not know, but he would make sure Derek survived.

Sabi pulled him to the tree that he himself had been propped against and laid him down there. He let the Human have his well-deserved sleep while he took watch. Deciding that the best course of action he could take would be to get the ODST to his squad, he pulled up a map on his Head-Up Display. It was at this point that he realized that they were not in the same place they were in when the Corvette crashed. No, that was a good distance away. How did they get here? Was it... Derek? There was no one else. So he owes his life to him again.

The Sangheili placed a beacon on the nearest Keep. He would start the search from there. He attached the ODST helmet to his belt and shook the Human to see if he would awake. He did not. Sighing, Sabi wrapped his arm around the Humans waist and lifted him effortlessly. This Human weighed no more than a Sangheilien child! Were all Humans this light? With Derek firmly in his grasp, he began the run to the Keep.

**I don't know about you, but I feel like this is my best fight scene yet. I've always wanted to incorporate the whole Carbine-plug-ejection thing into a battle. **

**With any luck, I hope to have this story finished and posted before Halo 4 hits the shelves. I have a feeling that the story will destroy the one I've made. Oh well, nothing can be done about that. **

**I just realized that I revealed a reference in the same chapter that the reference was in. **

"Run Human! Run!"

**That was in the last chapter. Sorry. **

**I don't think that there are any references in this chapter. I'm running out. **

**That's it for now. Feel free to leave a review on the way out. **

6. Chapter 6

The sun had almost begun to rise, and Sabi was halfway to the Keep when he heard a voice.

"Stop right there, ya split-chin bastard!"

Recognizing the derogatory term for his race, Sabi knew that he had not found the Humans. They had found him. Stopping and readjusting Derek's weight in his arm, he waited for the Human to reveal himself. Instead, the speaker and three other Humans walked out of the bushes, weapons trained on the Sangheili.

"Now I strongly suggest ya put the soldier down and step away."

Sabi did so and said, "Be careful. The warrior is wounded. His throat was crushed during his battle with a Brute Captain. Derk-Human fought

valiantly and honorably."

The Helljumper with magenta detailing on his armor stepped forward and said, "I'll take a look at him."

"Good. My medicinal skills are severely lacking. You can put your weapons away. I mean you no harm."

The lead ODST with white detailing replied, "Yeah, 'cause we're going to trust the word of an alien."

Sabi laughed and said, "An alien? You are on my planet, thus making you the aliens. You are lucky I did not kill your comrade here for trespassing."

The Human with red detailing asked, "Why didn't you?"

Sabi replied, "I have met this Human before, about five of your 'years' ago. I was but an Ultra then. He was just as skilled then as he is now. We both owe our lives to each other more times than I'd like to count."

"Wait. You've saved his life, and he has saved yours?" asked the Helljumper with green detailing.

"Correct."

The green ODST said to the squad leader, "¿Por que no confiamos en él?"

He replied, "Nobody here speaks Spanish. Try again."

"Why can't we trust him? I mean, Derek obviously does."

The red soldier said, "I agree with Alex. How about you, Jimmy?"

The magenta medic, apparently named Jimmy, was too busy working on Derek to pay attention to the conversation, so he said, "Uh... Whatever you say."

"We can't trust him because he's a freakin genocidal alien! Get that through yer thick skull, all of ya! Especially you, Scippy!" the yellow-detailed squad leader said, addressing the red ODST, who pulled off his red-striped helmet to reveal flame-red hair.

'Scippy' said, "You want to start another intergalactic war on top of the one we almost lost? Shut your mouth, Sarge, before I feed you your teeth and give you a permanent lisp!"

Squad leader 'Devonshire' was about to reply when the medic, Jimmy, spoke up "Derek is stable. I hooked him up to some oxygen. When we get a chance, I'll need to perform some field surgery. We should get to a safe place."

Sabi spoke up. "Agreed. I was bringing Derk to a Keep, which we can use as a base until you Humans can get off of the planet."

Taking a few menacing steps in the Elite's direction while stabbing a finger at him, Devonshire said, "No way in hell am I gonna let ya lead us into a trap. Ya may have them convinced, but I still don't

trust ya."

Sabi walked closer until he was nose to nose with the impudent Human. "I do not have to help you. I am only trying to ensure Derk-Human's survival. Not your squad, and especially not you. Only the honorable warrior."

Devonshire pumped his shotgun and Sabi ignited his energy sword in response. Just as one of them was about to die, Derek produced a cough in his sleep. Realizing what was at stake, Sabi backed down and extinguished his sword, thus breaking another tenet of his culture. _I have already disregarded most of my specie's beliefs by befriending a Human_, he thought.

Turning from the irritating squad-leader, Sabi looked over the rest of the gathered Humans. "Fine. Where has your squad been hiding?"

The Human with the interesting accent and second language, Alex, answered, "Nowhere in particular. We set up camp wherever we can."

"Then let us find a safe area," Sabi said as he picked up Derek in the same manner as before and began walking in a direction close to the Keep. The members of the squad looked to Devonshire for orders, who simply grumbled, shrugged, and began to follow the Elite. The squad followed suit. About an hour later, they arrived at a clearing that could provide safety and cover. The squad leader immediately split up the squad and ordered them to secure the area.

Jimmy said, "Place him next to that stump."

Sabi did so, being careful not to dislodge Derek's oxygen supply. Devonshire ordered the squad to secure the area while Jimmy performed the surgery. The Sangheili joined them seeing as there was nothing he could do. As he stopped beside a tree, the Human named Alex approached him.

"Â¿Por quÃ© le salvas Derek?"

"I do not speak that language, Human."

"Lo siento. Why did you save Derek?"

"He showed a courage that impressed me. For a Human anyway. He has returned the favor since I rescued him on New Harmony, which gives much credit to your race. I have made it my mission to see him returned to his home safely."

"Ah. You do not see it as dishonorable to associate yourself with Derek?"

"At first I did, Human. I am still not sure why I saved him back on New Harmony. My body simply acted. After he saved my life from a dishonorable death from a Stalker, I felt sickened and wanted to leave him for dead, and almost did too. But I came back. I certainly did not have to. The Minor I was with did not want to. But I did. I can not explain why."

Alex simply nodded, deep in thought, and walked off to guard a

different area. Sabi watched him walk away, then turned his attention back to the perimeter, reflecting on his friendship with the Human.

****New characters! Hooray! Unless, of course, you readers don't like having new characters. In that case, I'm sorry. They're not going anywhere. Unless, of course, something bad was to happen...****

****Don't worry about references. I've run out. Unless I can think of any more, this story will be nothing but serious from now on. Maybe. I can't help but add humor when necessary. ****

****A special thanks goes to my growing group of reviewers. You are the reason I'm writing. Be warned though, we're already halfway through the story. Savor it while you can. ****

7. Chapter 7

Sabi woke up when the sun shined on his face through gaps in the leaves of the tree he was in. Blinking, he adjusted quickly to the brightness and jumped to the ground. Then, he heard a voice.

"Hey, Granola Bar!"

Turning around, Sabi saw Derek approaching, a smile on his face.

"Derk! You live! I was worried that I would have to kill you myself."

Derek's smile wrinkled into a dubious grin. "Um... Thanks, I think. Anyway, what happened?"

"Your medic did not tell you?"

"Jimmy? No, I think he turned in after whatever happened."

Sabi told him about all that had happened since the battle, including his attempt to get medical help, his stand-off with Devonshire, and Jimmy's treatment.

Once finished, Derek said, "I see. You'll want to watch out for Devonshire. He really doesn't like you guys. So, can I have my helmet back?"

The Sangheili had forgotten that he had the helmet clipped to his belt. He gave it to Derek, who promptly pulled it on and depolarized the visor. Scippy walked out of the woods at that point and saw Derek. He walked over, saying, "Heeey! How's the newest member of the squad feeling?"

"Scippy, you ginger, I feel fine! I just had some trouble breathing, that's all," Derek replied while taking his helmet back off to scrape the blood from the inside of the visor.

"It was definitely a bit more than just 'trouble,'" Jimmy said, walking from the same area that Scippy came from. "You could barely breathe. I had to straighten and expand your air passages. You really

shouldn't be moving about right now. Or talking. Or breathing."

Before Derek could reply, Alex came running from the camp, calling out, "¡Derek! ¡Tu vivas!"

Derek responded, "Alex! I still don't speak Spanish, but I think I get what you're saying. I hope -"

He stopped when Devonshire entered the scene. The squad leader stopped in front of Derek, his face obscured by the visor. Devonshire finally said, "I thought I lost ya, ya fool. I'm glad to see that ya made it out okay."

Even though the visor was polarized, Derek could tell that his eyes were watching the Elite carefully. Not wanting to start any arguments between the two, Derek asked what their next course of action was. Sabi wanted to go to a Keep in order to group up with other Sangheili and send the Humans home, while Devonshire wanted to do anything but go along with Sabi's plans. While the plan was being discussed, Alex, who turned out to be quite the techie, took Derek's helmet to fix the communications radio.

The debate was becoming quite heated between the Elite and the squad leader, so nobody heard the incoming aircraft. An enemy Banshee suddenly began shooting at the group with its plasma while a second Banshee was launching fuel rod bombs at the camp. After getting over the initial shock, everyone split up and hid behind whatever cover they could find until the Banshees discontinued their strafing runs and left.

Once they were a good distance away, everyone came out of cover and regrouped under a very thick tree while the plasma scoring was still smoking. Even after what had just happened, Devonshire still wouldn't allow his squad to enter a Keep without the intention of burning it down. They were still arguing when they saw the Phantom approaching from a gap in the trees. Alex quickly threw Derek's helmet to its owner, stating that it wasn't quite fully fixed and that communications would be patchy.

The Phantom was heading straight towards them, obviously aware that they were there. Sabi and each member of the squad split up and ran in different directions. Without even realizing it, Derek found himself traveling in the same direction the Elite had chosen; as if sensing his pursuit, Sabi glanced back, and slowed his superior stride to allow the Human to catch up. Together they moved quickly away at a matched pace, one eye on the sky for that Phantom and the other out ahead to navigate. They could hear the sounds of the Phantom's weapons firing in the distance, and knowing that the dropship wasn't going after them, the pair slowed down to a walk.

Derek tried to radio his squad, but wasn't able to effectively communicate through all the static. Hoping that they could at least hear him, he reported that he was fine and would seek shelter. Not having a map of Sanghelios, he couldn't use any coordinates for beacons or use his helmet to track his squad mates. He had been isolated from his squad. Again.

"So," he began, his tone artificially chipper, "where's this Keep of

yours?"

****There's chapter 7. Haha, 7. I miss Bungie. We can only hope that 343 Industries will rise up to the challenge of Halo 4. What do you think? Will 343 succeed?***

8. Chapter 8

"Weren't you wearing white armor back on New Harmony?" Derek Cooper asked. He and Sabi 'Granul were making the journey to the Keep that Sabi thought they should go to.

"Yes, I was the rank of Ultra. I have since then been promoted into the ranks of Special Operations. Unfortunately, I have not actually participated in many special operations. I see you yourself have been promoted to what we used to call 'Imp'."

"Heh heh, yeah, I'm an 'Imp'. Apparently some higher-ups learned of my 'courageous' actions on New Harmony and wanted to use me as a role-model for new recruits." Derek smiled. "I enjoyed that. What wasn't very fun was the two years of recovery from when I took that spike in the knee. After that, I was quickly initiated into the Helljumpers."

"So I see," Sabi said. They walked in silence for a while. Eventually, Derek couldn't help but ask the question he'd been wondering about for quite some time, even though it was completely irrelevant to the previous conversation.

"Is it true that you guys have two hearts?"

Sabi gave a start; "What? Of course we do. Do you not also have two?"

"Nah, us Humans can survive with just one," Derek shrugged, nonchalant.

Looking down on him, Sabi said, "You are certainly small enough that you need only one heart to pump the blood. I still do not understand how your species survived to your space age. You are the least predatory creatures I have ever seen. You have no claws," he referred to his talons, "you have but one patch of hair on your body, you can barely lift your own weight, you cannot run very fast, and you have a single jaw," he finished with a flourish of his four mandibles. "Why are you not extinct?"

"Technology, innovation, creation, and intelligence. That's how I stand here today. We hunt with tools, not our teeth. We also learned quickly to harvest our own food. We Humans are omnivores, can you say the same? Our hair keeps us warm, something I wouldn't expect a reptile like you to understand. Your legs may be good for running with your double-knee structure thing, but I bet you have trouble climbing ladders, don't you? And with your four jaws like that, I doubt you can chew."

"Ah, but our mandibles give us Sangheili biting force and grip. You could never kill something with your teeth."

The competitive conversation lasted until they had reached the Keep's

outer walls. That's all they could see. A big, grey wall. At that point, they walked in silence towards the sealed entrance. A voice emanated from what was most likely a speaker by the entrance, "Proud Sangheili, why do you bring such vermin to our walls?"

Sabi answered, "He is a proven warrior and an accomplished soldier. We seek shelter while we figure out a way to send him home."

"You may enter, but not the Human."

"Either both of us enter, or neither of us."

"Then you may leave," the voice said.

Sabi turned around and walked back to the tree line with Derek following after sparing a last glance at the Keep. The ODSI asked, "Where will we go now?"

"We shall head to my own Keep, though it is a few days travel."

Hearing a noise in the distance that he remembered from five years ago, Derek asked, "What if we got a vehicle?"

* * *

><p>It had taken some careful gunfire and one frag grenade, but they finally lured the enemy Prowler in the right direction. All that was left was to execute the plan. Without warning, Sabi jumped from a tree and drove his energy sword through the Brute driver. Derek ran from behind a tree and grabbed the barrel of the turret as it swung around to fire at the Sangheili. Using his momentum and the turret's rotation, he swung himself up onto the Prowler where the gunner's confusion gave him time to draw his M6D and pistol-whip the Brute once before shooting the alien until its shields broke and a round pierced its skull. As the vehicle drifted to a halt, Sabi and Derek jumped off.<p>

Sabi pulled the Brute out of the turret seat before jumping in himself while Derek sat at the controls. The Marine was not driving due to skills. A couple of bumps with the local foliage and rocks proved that. No, he was driving simply because he was too short to use the turret, a fact he was not happy about. With directions from Sabi, he drove the Prowler towards the 'Granul Keep.

It was early morning by the time they arrived, and the temperature would have been blistering hot at about 105 degrees Fahrenheit if their armor didn't have in-suit environmental. As they rounded the hill blocking the Keep from view, they joined the intense battle for the city.

From one tree line to the other was about a mile of open field, interrupted only by gentle hills and the walled Keep in the exact center. There were hundreds of ground troops of all ranks on both sides. Ghosts, Prowlers, Wraiths, Spectres, and even a couple of Revenants were boosting through the battle. A constant storm of plasma was shooting through the air, lighting up the combatants. Shadows frequently passed over Sabi and Derek due to air vehicles flying past the three suns of Sanghelios. Unfortunately for the Elites, the Brutes seemed to be winning the battle for air supremacy

due to their larger amount of Phantoms and Banshees. Without the Covenant, the Elites didn't have anyone to provide them with supplies. The Brutes also had a Chieftain to rally behind who was directly engaged in the battle.

After spotting what appeared to be the largest group of Sangheili, Sabi said, "Come, Derek. We must regroup with my brothers."

The Corporal had no choice but to follow the alien as he ran into the fray. He readied his MA5C and charged down the hill.

Sorry about the wait. I have no excuse other than the standard excuse of life. The beginning conversation was quite fun to write. I hope it was just as much fun for you to read.

These chapters are getting harder and harder to do. But alas, the ending to this adventure is coming soon.

9. Chapter 9

Sabi 'Granul roared as he charged into the battle firing his Carbine at every invader that wasn't already dead. Derek Cooper was being much more conservative with his bursts, killing one target before moving on to the next.

It was when an Elite attacked him that he realized that he had no place in the battle. He wasn't fighting for Sanghelios, he was fighting for a way to return home, and it just so happened that the Elites were his best chance at accomplishing his goal. Seeing the offending Elite pushed aside by Sabi, a tug on his mind told him that he did have a reason for being here, and that reason was Sabi. Even if he did not fight for their species, Derek could still fight for his new comrade.

His train of thought derailed when he saw a great blue ball of plasma rise from a Wraith and fall towards his position. The ODST did not know which side the tank belonged to, nor did it matter. The plasma mortar was deadly either way. Running from what he hoped was the landing spot of the plasma, he was satisfied to hear it crash down on what was mostly the Brute line. Their screams were drowned out by the sounds of war all around him. There was nothing to be heard but the sound of weapons discharging and creatures dying. There was nothing to be seen but endless waves of aliens trying to kill each other and spikes and plasma flying in all directions. His armor had protected him from some plasma shots, but was weakening. He doubted its ability to keep him safe from spiker rounds.

Having difficulty keeping Sabi in sight, Derek ran through the battle while shooting at only those who were standing in his way. Without warning, he broke into the Elite line, ramming straight into one of the aliens. Due to its mass, the Helljumper simply fell to his back, the Elite barely having moved. Even so, it was not happy. An audible buzz and the energy dagger unsheathed from its gauntlet. Raising its hand above its head, it began to descend on the Human, but Derek was prepared. He brought his left leg up and kicked the Elite in the jaws, stopping its attack. Another Elite was about to take a stab at him when Sabi suddenly appeared and pushed the offending Elite away.

"Stop, my brothers! He is an ally. You shall treat him as a guest of Sanghelios, for his stay is only temporary. My objecti-

Sabi's speech was interrupted when the battle resumed from its lull. Many of the Sangheili turned back to the battle, ignoring the new arrivals.

Derek got to his feet and looked around at the towering Elites surrounding him. It was difficult to tell, but he was fairly sure that those who did not return to the battle were scowling. When no one challenged him, Sabi said,

"So be it. Where is the Kaidon, leader of this Keep?"

An Elite Ultra answered, "He has challenged the Jiralhanae Chieftain, Barbarus, to a one-on-one duel. They are in the forest in that direction."

Sabi looked in the direction the Ultra had pointed at, past the battle and into the woods. He turned back towards Derek and said, "The Kaidon is the only one who can send you home. We must make sure he survives his battle."

Derek simply nodded and let Sabi lead him through the Elites and to the outskirts of the battle. As they reached the forest and began towards where the Chieftain and Kaidon supposedly were, Derek tried to reach his squad mates on the radio, but was met with only static. Just as he was about to give up, he could faintly hear what sounded like Gunnery Sergeant Devonshire, but his words were unintelligible. As suddenly as the connection began, it ended just as abruptly. All further attempts at communication failed.

The distinctive thunder of a Gravity Hammer could be heard as they approached their destination. Sabi sprinted the rest of the distance with Derek doing his best to keep up. They arrived at the clearing just in time to see the Kaidon smashed in the chest by the Gravity Hammer and sent careening into the bushes. Sabi roared as the Chieftain picked up the fallen Sangheili's deactivated Energy Sword and hung it at his waist as a trophy. The Brute looked up at the pair and laughed.

"I am Barbarus, conqueror of Sanghelios! What chance does an insignificant grunt and his pet Human have against me? I will gladly skin you-

He was cut off as Derek opened fire upon him.

**Don't you just hate arrogant monologues? It looks like Derek does.
**

I know, I know. Short chapter. But as Pete Stacker would say, that's life. But hey, you will be rewarded for your patience. The finale is approaching. Who will survive?

**Thanks go to my wonderful reviewers. They mean a lot to me.
**

Sabi 'Granul followed Derek's lead by opening fire with his Carbine, preventing Barbarus from continuing his monologue. Angered, the Chieftain leaped forward and tried to smash the pair, but they had already dodged cleanly away. The Sangheili and the Human were now on opposite sides of the clearing, allowing them to hit Barbarus from both sides. Being a close-range fighter, the Brute could only focus on one enemy at a time, so he tossed a spike grenade at Sabi and focused his attention on the Human.

Charging forward, he slammed his hammer into the ground where Derek was a second before. The ODS completed his roll just in time to duck under the horizontal swing of the hammer, giving him the chance to tackle the Chieftain. Well, he would've if the alien weighed a couple hundred pounds less. It was like tackling a wall. The Brute laughed while creating space between him and the Human before kicking him across the clearing. Barbarus turned around when he heard a roar accompanying the igniting of an Energy Sword.

Sabi was surprised about the agility of the Chieftain. He just barely managed to evade his stab, the Brute's shields flaring from the proximity of the sword. Barbarus completed his turn and smashed the butt of his hammer across the Sangheili's face, sending him to the ground. The Brute raised his hammer for a finishing blow but stopped when his shields began to take a small amount of damage. Derek had lost his rifle, leaving him with just his M6D, which he was using as a distraction. He knew the small arms fire would do nothing against the Chieftain's shields, but he continued firing anyway.

The Human was nothing more than an annoyance to the Brute, so he treated him as such. With a casual flick of the wrist, he tossed a spike grenade towards the pest. It latched onto the tree Derek was using as cover and exploded while he was preoccupied with pulling out a new magazine. The alien gave a predator's smile as he watched the Helljumper fall to his back with a metal spike piercing his blue visor.

Sabi said nothing, but the look in his eyes told everything. Jumping to his feet, he began to swing wildly with his sword. The Chieftain had to exert an impressive amount of effort in order to dodge each attack, but eventually he was able to go on the offensive and take his own swings at the warrior. He eventually had the Elite right where he wanted him: stumbling underneath his dropping hammer.

The Sangheili, however, was full of surprises. Sabi quickly rose up and stabbed at Barbarus' unprotected belly. Unfortunately for the Elite, he had forgotten about the Chieftain's one-use ability to overcharge his shields, an ability the Humans call Invincibility. The Energy Sword simply glanced off the shields, doing absolutely no damage. The Brute grinned and smashed the Gravity Hammer down, just barely missing the Elite, but the gravity displacement broke both of Sabi's legs and threw him backwards until he hit a tree trunk.

In pain, but still conscious, he snatched Derek's magnum from the ground and attempted to shoot the advancing Chieftain, whose Invincibility had worn off, but the M6D didn't have a magazine nor a bullet in the chamber. Accepting his fate, he watched the Brute close in for the killing blow. Barbarus was preparing to take the Sangheili's head as a trophy when he felt something smack against his own. Looking down, he found the Human's helmet at his feet with a spike piercing the visor.

"Forget something, furball?!"

"Derek!" cried out Sabi as he tossed his deactivated Energy Sword. The Jiralhanae Chieftain tracked it through the air until it landed in the hands of the annoying Human. Derek clumsily ignited the sword, for it was designed for someone with much bigger, multi-thumbed, hands. Once activated, he could at least semi-comfortably hold the weapon.

"Foolish Human! You should have stayed down. If it is a duel you want, it is a duel you shall receive. I will feast upon your bones!" challenged Barbarus as he secured his hammer on his back and ignited the Energy Sword he had taken from the Kaidon as a trophy.

"I don't think you'll like my flavor." said Derek, his green eyes unobscured by a visor. Blood was welling and dripping from a fresh wound that went from just under his left eye to the side of his nose where the wound was deepest. It was obvious that the spike had come to a rest there.

The Brute charged forward, snarling, as he took the same wild swings that he took with his hammer. Derek had difficulty blocking the powerful strikes, so most of his defense consisted of dodging and countering. He knew that he couldn't use strength to win the battle, so he would have to use skill. Unfortunately, he was lacking in experience with swordplay. The Chieftain also was not used to swords, so the duel came down to who would get the lucky strike first.

The Energy Swords slashed and crashed with each other, each strike accompanied by a block or a dodge. Each defense accompanied by a counter. The Chieftain's horizontal strikes were met with a block or a duck, the vertical dodged and countered. Derek paused for a brief moment to wipe the sticky blood from his face, and then returned to the fight.

Barbarus was driving him back, until he was almost out of the clearing. The Corporal surprised the Brute by pouring all of his strength into a strike. The double-pronged blades of both combatants intertwined, and were locked up to the point where neither of the fighters could break apart.

That was when the Jiralhanae used his advantage of strength, pushing the swords back towards Derek, but the Human redirected the blades by side-stepping. After the Brute's third attempt, Derek redirected the Energy Swords into an upwards arc that managed to slice through the Chieftain's headdress, causing his shield generator to fail. Angered, Barbarus roared as he lashed out a leg, kicking and snapping Derek's left leg at the knee. He cried out as he fell over and lost his grip on the sword, which deactivated and hit the ground.

The Chieftain chuckled as his opponent fell, but stopped when he began to rise again. Using a tree as support, Derek pulled himself to a standing position. Barbarus noticed sparks and circuitry between the cracks in the leg armor. His leg at a very unnatural angle, the ODST reached into a pouch at his waist and said,

"You chose the wrong limb."

"Then permit me to try again," replied the Brute as he lunged

forward. He watched the Human throw a small object at him and laughed as it missed while he swung the Energy Sword through his broken and remaining leg. Barbarus was pleased to see blood spurting from the partially cauterized stump. Derek screamed as he fell to his back in terrible pain. The Jiralhanae was content to just watch the Human bleed out, but was distracted by a scuffling noise behind him. He turned just in time to see the Sangheili pick up the object that was thrown at him by the Human and slide it into the small pistol.

Even though the weapon was far too small to fit comfortably in his large hands, Sabi aimed it at the unshielded head of the Chieftain and pulled the trigger until the gun stopped firing. Without a sound, the Brute fell to the ground with multiple holes in his face.

****And there it is, friends. The end to this battle. This isn't the end of the story, though. Everything will be wrapped up next chapter. With Derek bleeding out, how will it end? Stay tuned!****

****...Corny jokes aside, how did I do on the final battle? Satisfactory? I hope so. Thank you to my reviewers. You're all wonderful people!****

****... And you better appreciate my dedication to this story! I posted this while a whirling hurricane was raging in my backyard! Just a couple minutes after I posted this chapter, the power died. I hope this is worth it!****

11. Finishing the Fight

Sabi gave a sigh of relief and opened his communications with the Battle Net. He immediately was swamped with the sounds of battle, but he could piece together that the Brutes were disorganized and lost without their leader.

His brethren were winning! He reported in, saying that he and the Kaidon required assistance, and that a medically trained Sangheili should be brought. Now he could only hope that a medic was available. Due to the dishonor in Sangheilien culture that came with being a doctor, there were very few available. Sabi crawled to and looked down at Derek. He had ceased his screaming, but only because he had passed out from the loss of blood. Sabi knew that Humans didn't have nearly as much blood as a Sangheili, so the puddle surrounding him was concerning. More concerning was the fact that the leg was still bleeding.

He had to stop the bleeding somehow. Human anatomy couldn't be all that different from his own in terms of the circulatory system. But how to stop it? A tourniquet? No, he had no cloth or other suitable material. He tried smothering the stump with his hand, but failed. Only one thing left to do, he thought. Ejecting the purple Plasma Dagger from a gauntlet, he carefully used its heat to cauterize the wound, causing weak screaming from the Corporal. Just as he finished the job, five of his brothers entered the clearing. The smallest of them carried medical supplies. While the warriors began to secure the area, Sabi pointed to him and said,

"Brother, this Human requires urgent medical assistance!"

The medic shook his head and replied,

"I cannot do that. Any honor that I still possess would be lost. Our tradition-

"Tradition?" Sabi snarled, feeling a new rush of energy accompanying his anger. "This is a new Age, brother. Everything we have ever believed in has turned out to be a lie and you are still dictated by tradition? This Human is not our enemy. The Prophets are. His race accepted us during the Great Schism, and we fought together to achieve a common goal. After everything we have done to his kind, we must seek redemption. Will you help him?"

The medic lowered his head and walked over to the ODS. Kneeling down, he surveyed the wound. After bandaging it, he pulled out a syringe, but then shook his head and put it away.

"I should not use any of my painkillers or healing accelerators. I do not know what effect they would have on a Human's body. I can do nothing more."

"But I can," came a voice. An ODS walked out of the trees and depolarized his visor. The Human medic, Jimmy, knelt down beside Derek's unconscious form and began administering painkillers and biofoam where necessary. When he had finished, and Derek was in a stable condition, he stood up and asked,

"Is there a place for him to rest awhile? Time and relaxation are the best healers."

Before the Sangheili medic could reply, a deep voice said,

"I shall allow him to stay."

Jimmy half-turned to watch the owner of the voice approaching; the Elite was of an impressive size and wore armor with intricate detailing, but it had been crushed, wrinkled and split and a few pieces looked to be missing. He walked like he owned the clearing, and everything in it, and his painful looking limp did nothing to detract from that image. Everyone present could tell this was the Kaidon of the keep.

Bushes were parted as squad leader Devonshire stomped into the clearing. Without missing a beat, the Gunnery Sergeant interjected with, "Yeah ya better, split-lip," as if he'd been the only one to miss the influential presence the warrior approaching them wore. The human cast the Kaidon a look up and down once as the remainder of his squad entered the clearing, joining the gathering. Adding a hint of snide sentiment to his tone, Devonshire continued with, "Unless someone else is gonna take credit, I'm gonna say my boy here killed that giant ape on the ground thereâ€| correct?" It seemed more a challenge, than asking after facts.

Sensing a need to interrupt the building tension, Sabi spoke up from his place on the ground; "It was a joint effort, human, but your squadmate deserves most of the credit, yes. He fought with great honor."

Even as he saw Sergeant Devonshire roll his eyes, the Kaidon drew himself up, and squared his massive shoulders under the broken armor. Staring Devonshire in the eye, his answer came out clear and concise,

without any response to the Helljumper's challenging tone. "That is why I am extending the hospitality of my keep toward him." The Kaidon glanced down briefly, to see Derek, and over slightly from there to see Sabi, then returned his steel gaze back to the Gunnery Sergeant. "The rest of you, however, are on your own."

Devonshire curled a lip, but his tone stayed mainly snide and didn't reflect the expression overmuch; "We're going nowhere without our soldier."

The Kaidon didn't move, didn't even blink. "Perhaps. But he is going somewhere without you."

"With respectâ€¦| sirâ€¦|" Jimmy put in, empathizing with Sabi's earlier attempt to diffuse the Sergeant's thus far futile attempts to bait the Kaidon into a confrontation. The Elite looked down, granting him attention; Devonshire didn't, continuing to stare holes into the Kaidon instead. "The Corporal would be better served by getting on a ship heading back to UNSC space. I can't give him the medical attention he needs and your people couldn't even if they wanted to."

A moment of silence passed between all of them, heavy and pregnant.

Finally, Devonshire relinquished his stare at the Kaidon and took a moment to see Derek for himself. In that moment, the Kaidon inclined his head in assent; "Then that is the hospitality I shall extend." A gathering of other Elites, all in varying stages of battle-wear, began to sift through the treeline, though none ventured much beyond it. The Kaidon turned his head to regard them anyway; "Secure a transport to orbit. If the wounded human dies, he will take the honor of your houses with him."

Despite all earlier expression, when the Kaidon looked back again down at them, Sabi understood the Kaidon was deeply hurt that he had been denied the conclusion to a battle rightfully his; a battle to the death. While it was within his honor code to ensure Derek's survival and return to health at the moment, that really said nothing for maintaining it in the future given what Derek's actions â€" however noble â€" had caused to the Kaidon's personal honor. Choosing not to complicate the easement of the situation, Sabi kept his mandibles shut as his brothers-at-arms brought forth a Phantom to move the Helljumpers off-world.

Derek would live to fight another day. Perhaps, if the old gods were kind, so too would Sabi.

He felt a sense of duty to try, at least, so as to be there when the Kaidon next came for Derek.

The End

****Done. I've finished the fight. It's over. Or perhaps we're just getting started?****

****Now for some personal stuff.****

****This story was done entirely from my iPod. If whoever is reading this thinks that sounds like a good way of writing, please don't. It**

was nice to be able to write that from wherever I want, but it's just so annoying to type with...**

**A special thanks go to all of my reviewers. Thanks to TehMaskedWarrior for sticking with me throughout the entire series so far and thanks to FtDLulz and ultimate idiot for reviewing consistently. Thank you elfprincess for finally reappearing. **

**A special thanks goes to my comrades who I portrayed as "Alex," "Scippy," "Jimmy," and "Devonshire." Personally, I thought I depicted them well as characters. If you guys are reading this, then I'm sorry for making you Hispanic, "Alex," I'm sorry for making you level-headed "Jimmy," "Scippy," you're just about the same as you're character, and I'm sorry for making you the antagonist and have a weird accent (Scottish/British?), "Devonshire." Now let's play some Custom Games. **

**Finally, thanks to La Aardvark. Without you, this wouldn't be half as readable as it is today. I owe this story to you. I can't thank you enough. **

**And thank you to all my readers. And I mean ALL my readers. Thanks so much. **

Now that the chapter long 'thank you' is done, I'll start considering a sequel. No guarantees, so don't even get your hopes up.

See you starside!

End
file.